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XVI.—On Some of the Mountain Tribes of the N.W. Frontier of India.  
By MAJOR FOSBERRY, V.C.

A CONSCIOUSNESS of my own inability to deal as I should wish with my subject would have caused me to hesitate before consenting to read this paper had it not been for the certainty that a personal knowledge of one's subject, however slight, has always a value not possessed by any mere recapitulation of the testimony of others; just as the roughest measurement is always in scientific experiment more valuable than the most careful guess; and further, because I have received in advance, a promise that the nature of my acquaintance with these people will be considered in the judgment passed on those shortcomings which you are about to perceive for yourselves.

I have, as you will see from the title of this paper, limited myself to a few of the frontier tribes, and I have done so because from those of whom I am about to speak were mainly drawn the troops with whom we have been latterly in contact—because they possess a character not wholly shared by the more mixed races further to the south and west, and because on these in the future will be concentrated a far higher degree of political and military interest.

My geographical limits then will commence eastward at the Indus, and extend as far west and south as the Afreedres and cognate tribes, north of the great Soliman range.

From several able and interesting works it is easy to form a fair estimate of the Belooches and mixed races of the Scind frontier; their good fortune not only early taught them the inexpediency of braving a power represented to them by such men as Herbert Edwards and John Jacob, but has also placed them to one side of those strategic positions which have hitherto proved the keys of the Indian Empire. For as in Alexander's time, so now, the occupation of the line of the Oxus is a menace to the line of the Indus; and to the countries intervening and the tribes who inhabit them must be strongly attracted the interest of those whom such menaces affect.

Furthermore, it is impossible to forget that these peoples, together with the now distracted Afghan kingdom, are the representatives of that power which once ruled Asia from the Caspian to the Jumna, and from the Oxus to the shores of the Indian Sea. That here, concentrated in little space, and torn by internal feuds, and daily falling more and more under the shadow of overpowering forces which must soon overwhelm them, lies a nation which has always formed a remarkable problem whether to European or Asiatic minds. Laying claim to

Jewish descent, calling themselves to this hour the children of Joseph or David, their countenances and customs in many instances seem to support pretensions, which otherwise evidently involve many inaccuracies, and are probably wholly unsusceptible of logical proof.

Figure to yourselves a Jew who looked neither stunted nor cursed, a descendant not of persecuted dwellers in cities, but of a race free and masterful in thought and action, for centuries the lords of the mountain by inheritance and the plain by conquest, active, well knit, and handsome, proud in thought and carriage, skilled and dauntless in the use of arms, hospitable to his guest, true to his friend, but an enemy as unscrupulous as bitter—as it was said of old, *impiger iracundus inexorabilis arce*—unhappily quick in quarrel, but stern and swift to avenge it ; and you have the Affghan or Patuan type of our north-west frontier.

His characteristic virtues are rather those of the west than the east ; his whole temperament is distinct from that of the nations who surround him, whilst his vices are those common on the one hand to the mountaineers of all countries, on the other are due to his religion and the peculiar traditional customs which he has derived from some former lawless condition. His higher qualities must often excite our admiration or exact our respect. His weaknesses are but few, and his vices rather move us to anger or pity than afford us the satisfaction of contempt. Whilst however the general characteristics of all the Patuan tribes remain in great measure the same, and their common origin is undoubted, the physical aspect of the countries they hold, the climatic variations due to a greater or less elevation, the influences of a poorer or richer soil, their isolation in remote valleys, or the free intercourse with others, enjoyed by the dwellers in the plain, have given them local peculiarities often very distinctly marked whether they be those of appearance, of dialect, or of customs.

Thus, for instance, the western Afghans are fairer in complexion as a rule than the inhabitants of Swât or Bonau, whilst the latter are ignorant and bigoted in exact proportion to the height of the mountains and the difficulty of the passes which separate them from their more cultivated neighbours ; and in many of the smaller vallies a barbarous *patois* takes the place of the national pashtoo.

Still the parent stock of all is the Affghan, and we shall clearly best learn their probable origin from a consideration of the Affghan accounts of themselves, checked by what we are able to gather concerning them from other and independent sources.

It must be premised that nationally these men are great

genealogists, with a passion for careful records of lineage, which are frequently recited even in ordinary conversation. That the records of all the tribes point to a common ancestor, and that that ancestor is again said to have been of Jewish origin and a direct descendant of king Saul.

There exists however no other record of Afghana, son of Yareemiah, son of Saul. And it is fully possible that this individual was invented for the purpose of accounting satisfactorily for the name given them by the Persians, and that their descent from king Saul was also devised on their conversion to Mahommedanism in order to connect them with one of whom the Koran speaks so highly. It is in this way also that some of the adventures attributed to Kees, their undoubted ancestor, originated, for whilst they represent him to have been an honoured companion of the Prophet himself, and to have received from him many favours with the name of Abdoolraschid and the title of Patuan or Mast, signifying his importance to the vessel of the faith, we cannot but perceive that Patuan is but a corruption of Pukhtoon, their national name. Whilst the Arabian authors also omit all mention of Kees, and aver that the prophet declared Pashtoo to be the language of hell, these and other inconsistencies in their accounts led Mr. Elphinstone and Professor Dorn to doubt the whole story of their Jewish origin. Sir William Jones on the other hand was disposed to accept it, and gave several reasons for doing so. In later times philologists have attempted to prove or disprove it by an analysis of their language. This last would seem to any one, who recollects the ease with which the Flemish of Belgium or the German of the Rhine frontier has passed into very tolerable French, an argument as to original race which must be very cautiously used.

On such questions I am but ill able to offer an opinion, though it would almost appear that the man himself and his mind as expressed in his customs and actions should be accepted as proving more than can be negatived by mere want of consistency in his traditions, or of certain roots in his language. One thing is at least certain, that to a *physique* eminently Jewish in appearance they unite many of the intellectual and mental peculiarities of that people, and have an unwritten law which constantly reminds us of Jewish customs; and though this may also have been derived in part through the Koran, there still remain those features which can neither be denied nor explained away.

I should exceed the limits of a paper like the present were I to attempt to give more than a very general sketch of his leading peculiarities; whilst, as I have said before, I shall better

fulfil its object by affording to others some data on which to form an opinion, than by attempting to construct or maintain any theory of my own, or taking either side in former controversies.

I have already given you some idea of the appearance of these men, whose looks have in every case formed the foundation of those theories regarding them which further inquiry has caused some to reject and others to accept, according to the spirit in which the investigation was undertaken, and the sort of proof admitted or refused. Perhaps, indeed, the very strongest proof obtainable lay in his very starting point, which, as the inquiry proceeded, became less and less admitted to its due share in the final result, however this may be.

The cradle of the Patuan or Afghan race, as at present constituted, appears to have been placed considerably to the westward of Cabul, at Gune, a city whose ruins are stated to exist at no great distance from Herat. They say that their ancestors wandered to these hills after the Babylonish captivity. It is evident, however, since all alike trace back to a common point in their genealogy, and *that* point a single family at a period subsequent to that event, that these people, even should their Jewish origin be proved beyond dispute, cannot be the present representatives of what are called "the lost tribes" as some have supposed. Lieutenant Wood, near Jerm in Badakshan, met with a Jew who had arrived in the neighbourhood on a pilgrimage in search of these tribes, and was eventually turned back by the Chinese mandarin commanding at Kashgar.

There is also in these regions an unexplored corner. A country all but inaccessible to enemies or friends, strong in physical character, and in the bravery of those who hold it, lies in the angle of the Hindoo Coosh, the country of the Leah Posh Kafir—the black-robed unbelievers in Islam, as their name implies.

Around these people hangs such a veil of mystery, and they are at present so difficult of access, that I have thought it well to include in my survey of the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions such an account of them also as I have been able to gather from various sources.

A reference to the map will show the whole region of which I propose to speak to be broken up into numerous valleys by mountain ranges of greater or less elevation. These ranges are all of them more or less spurs or offsets from the great chain of the Hindoo Koosh or Indian Caucasus. Some are of considerable elevation, and render communication between the little plains which they enclose a matter of much difficulty. The watershed is towards the Indus, which receives the Bu-

numdoo and Cabul rivers and other less considerable streams. The passes which give access to the various valleys have a general direction at right angles to the great chain, and it follows from this that their conquest by the Patuan has been made by a succession of attacks, dealing with each section separately, rather than by a progress from west to east parallel to the mountains. It is this circumstance which has given a local character to the tribes, which renders any great combination of them difficult, protects them also from feeling very widely the effects of an attack from the direction of the Indus or Peshawur valley.

Previously to our arrival in this valley, it was always customary, in order to check the raids of the mountaineers on the plain, to establish a military frontier cordon, and to revenge such raids on the perpetrators by attacks directed on their fastnesses in the hills themselves. These stand to the present hour in the Dua jât mounds eleven hundred years old, originally erected for the defence of the small garrisons necessary to the peace of the border. We ourselves have, since our occupation of the Punjab, found it necessary to make more than twenty expeditions into these hills.

There have conquered or fallen, too often unrewarded or unknown, many able soldiers in bitterly-disputed fields, whose position is unmarked in the mass, and whose name even reaches but a few of us through the medium of some obscure blue-book. But to this hour the mountaineers are untamed by our strength and unreconciled by any attitude we have assumed towards them.

On the other side of these mountains advances hour by hour, with a march unscrupulous, undeviating, of a mechanical regularity, that great Power of the North, whose shadow already moves over Asia far in advance of its camps and outposts, and by the power of an unexpressed but fully-recognised antagonism, diminishes at each step in advance that prestige by which, far more than by the sword itself, we have always ruled the Oriental. To the feelings which dictate such speeches as this, it has been the custom to apply opprobriously the name Russophobia.

If, however, it be lawful to fear anything, I confess freely to a dread of any influence, from whatever distance propagated and by whatever means maintained, which, in a country like Asia, tends to divest the mind of the ruled of that confidence in the might of his ruler, which has been established by the talents, the sufferings, and the blood of such a noble army of our countrymen. These mountains are our natural frontier and defence; these tribes those who ought to be, not merely

neutral spectators of what is to follow, but heart and soul our allies offensive and defensive. At this moment it is but the dread of some fresh embroglio that keeps their hands from our property and their swords from our throats.

Abbott in Huzara, and Edwardes in Bumoo, proved that kindness and conciliation, united to a manly bearing and even-handed justice, gained in incredibly short times their confidence and respect. They are not by any means different in heart from other men: bigotry will always yield to knowledge—savage customs to civilisation—enmity to persistent kindness, here as elsewhere, with as much certainty as the night flies before the rising sun; but to a people whose oldest custom prescribes the exaction of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and beyond all, blood for blood to the third and fourth generation, the killing of their relations in the fairest fight has an effect the reverse of desirable.

The experiences of the Umbeyla campaign, the last but one of these expeditions, showed us much of the character of these men as exhibited in war, and the interior economy of the tribes also, and their attachment to their religion was illustrated in a remarkable way.

There, mustered under their huge and many-coloured silk standards, and headed by hereditary chieftains, stood often in order of battle, masses of wild swordsmen, who wanted but arms, discipline, and cohesion amongst themselves to render them the equals of any troops in the world. Who could refuse his admiration to the dash, the *élan*, which carried these poorly-armed mountaineers up the face of hills one thousand feet in height to face, at the top of it, the arms, the discipline, and the *physique* of English soldiers? The devotion which made them face a storm of canister at close quarters, throw themselves in the teeth of it into the embrasures of our heavy battery, that prompted their continual attacks on our advanced posts, in which scores were cut down by the fire of our infantry and mountain guns, others cheerfully taking their places, to be rewarded, at least, perhaps, by some transient success, immediately afterwards snatched from them, at the end of some of these attacks, the work would be found strewn with small beans blessed by the Ackhroud, their priestly head, who assured them that, were they once thrown inside our defences, our hearts would become as water and our swords and bullets equally inoffensive. The shrewd ascetic had well reckoned that, once within throwing distance, the Pathan would not easily be denied, and the result, in more than one instance, fully justified his calculation. Again, the pouches found on the bodies of the slain were often filled with small

angular crystals, chipped down to fit the bore of the matchlock. Their swords were often heavy curved blades of iron, but the temper of the man compensated for its want in the weapon, and his skill with the sword was incomparable. Bows and arrows were not unknown amongst them, but rare, as were also slings. In the use of the stone, however, they were singularly expert, and in their hands it became a powerful weapon of offence. Gathering up the skirt of their long blue robes in the left hand, which also gripped the hilt of the sword, the Pathans would fill the pouch thus formed with heavy stones, then shouting their war-cry, they would advance, hurling the stones into the work in such numbers that scarcely a single defender escaped some severe contusion. At the last moment the sword was transferred from the left hand to the right, and, springing over the light breastworks, they were fighting hand to hand and for life or death in an instant. They use the stone in punishments as well as war. More than this, they use it in a strange way in solemn contracts, in which the oath required is sworn over a stone set up as a silent witness of the compact. With such weapons as these such men fairly faced us, and sometimes not by any means to our advantage. The patriarchal character of their government was seen in the manner in which, on the fall of a chief, his entire clan left the camp.

On the other hand, we have fortunately no experience of our own by which to estimate the fidelity of our Pathan soldiery, who, seeing fathers, brothers, neighbours, and friends fighting in the enemy's ranks, without a single exception manfully stood by us, and by their noble truth to duty, read such a lesson to those who, far and near, had counted on their defection, as will not easily be forgotten in India. Such traits of character create in us an admiration and interest which lead us to desire the friendship of their possessors, and a more intimate knowledge of the country which has produced these men, and the habits of life which have moulded them in a measure to what they are.

In all we find a certain pride of birth exaggerated amongst some tribes, such as the Mornunds for instance, into overbearing haughtiness, tempered in others by the natural joyousness of their character, we see an independence of bearing, derived partly from the character of their country, partly from their skill in arms and the traditions of former greatness. An extreme hospitality, which leads them often into unwarrantable extravagance and the utter neglect of domestic economy, provides a public place of entertainment for guests; it frequently embroils them with their neighbours for shelter afforded to some fugitive pursued by the avenger of blood, or his enemy in some private quarrel.



Among all the Afghans the custom is that the man purchase his wife, and the practice causes them to regard their women with the additional respect due to valuable property. Amongst the Eusofzaie tribes the price is frequently paid in kind, the son-in-law working out the value of his intended, whom he is frequently not permitted to see, as the servant of his father-in-law. Amongst some of them the custom of Namuth Bazee, however, prevails, and modifies the relations of the betrothed couple. If the widow of an Afghan be without children, it is considered to be the duty of his brother to marry her, and it would be thought a grave insult to him if another first offered to do so ; if now there be children, re-marriage is at the option of the woman.

They have several peculiarities which we search for in vain amongst other Orientals. To their greater gravity of demeanour they sometimes unite a degree of positive bashfulness, of which the Hindoo is wholly guileless ; a certain stateliness, so to speak, and solidity of intellect and expression contrast remarkably with their subtle genius and emphatic and voluble declamation. They understand the passion of love in a manner analogous to our own, and their poets have expressed in touching and beautiful language depths of passionate feeling and subtle alternations of emotion, such as we should expect to find in few even amongst European literatures ; therefore wholly at variance with the sensual or sentimental lyrics of their neighbours.

Some of these poems are written and are in high estimation amongst them ; others treating of love or war are handed down from one to the other, and being sung by their village hearth or camp watch-fire, light up their handsome features with a depth of feeling or excite to a degree of enthusiasm of which the others would be incapable.

They are a joyous people, too, these Patuans. Their social gatherings are things apart ; we find no other Asiatics congregating as they do at some shrine or meeting-place, neither to trade nor quarrel, but simply to amuse themselves and be happy. All alike regard any but military or agricultural pursuits as beneath them, though an Afghan noble will not hesitate to sell the horse or the land which he no longer requires. They are much addicted to field sports, such as coursing and hawking, and at the gatherings above mentioned racing, tilting, and shooting at a mark combine with their wild music to afford them amusement. A species of bagpipe, the pipe, and tabor are their common musical instruments, and it is strange to hear in these far-off hills notes which seem to belong rather to the highlands of Scotland or the wilds of Calabria.

Their cultivation of the plain country is laborious certainly from the necessity of irrigation, but well conducted and pro-

ductive. On the hills, terrace after terrace supporting soil brought from below, and narrow slips of vegetation, testify to a strong degree of perseverance which is but scantily rewarded.

Thus some of those hill tribes that border on the plains and hold none of the lower lands are driven to plunder for a subsistence; others live by the tolls collected on the caravans of merchandise which use the passes that traverse their country; and to others again is regularly paid a species of black mail to purchase the security of the traveller. Whilst the robber of the Mahabun and Indus frontier comes down from his hills with a bullock skin under his arm which he inflates, and crossing the river plunders the village on the other side, the Afnedee lies in wait by the highway, the Khyberrie infests the pass, and the Zaka Khail digs through the wall by night and plunders the stable or the dwelling. The latter—who, for the credit of the nation, are but a small community and in evil odour—pass the new-born infant through a hole dug in the wall of the dwelling, saying over him three times, *Ghal Shah*, or be a thief. It is they who, being at one time in difficulties, owing to their having no shrine of their own, and being unwelcome to those of others, lay in wait for a holy man proceeding to Cabul, murdered him in the Khyber, buried him in their lands, and to this hour pay their devotions with much satisfaction at the ziarut or place of pilgrimage thus improvised and thus consecrated.

I have already spoken of the Pukhtoon rules, or Afghan traditional custom and code of honour. To this the Afreedres are of all the wilder tribes the most devoted. By it are laid down forms of punishment for various crimes; and as it evidently dates from some period in their history when a man's own right hand was the strongest protector he could expect for his life or prosperity, it recognises, nay, enforces, right of private vengeance and the penalty of blood for blood, to be enforced by the nearest relation of him slain. Stoning to death was provided for other offences. And generally very different consequences followed wrong-doing to that meted out amongst some other Afghans, with whom the murderer was fined twelve ladies of the family; whilst he who only broke his enemy's front tooth had to pay six; and with whom a different number was allotted according to the position of a wound inflicted or the time which it took in healing.

An instance came under my own observation, in which there being a blood feud between two Afreedres in one of our frontier regiments, a sergeant and a private; the sergeant obtained ten days' leave, went to their common village, laid up near the spring which supplied it with water, and shot the brother of

the private when he came to drink ; he then returned to head quarters, and seeing the private on parade recommended him to get leave also and go home, as his family affairs were in disorder. The private asked and was told the cause, and learning it complained to the officer in command. The sergeant was called up and reprimanded, but this did not content the other, who went away after registering a vow of vengeance, which has doubtless long ere this led to further mischief.

It is certain that the inhabitants of these regions once were Budhists, but that this religion was ever professed by the Afghans themselves is at least doubtful. Caves and sculptures at Bamean and in the Eusofzaie testify to this fact. Sculptures illustrative of the Budhist religion are constantly dug up ; and at Umbegla were found during our stay some alto-reliefs in stone, of which the figures were carved with rare delicacy and skill, were almost as perfect as when chiselled two thousand years ago, and of which the draperies as well as the features had a cast rather Grecian than like anything we have been accustomed to attribute to Indian art.

In a rock edict in favour of Budhism in the Eusofzaie, we found the author, an Indian king, speaking of the successors of Alexander as his own contemporaries ; and further research on the sites of many mounds of ruins spread over this country would probably richly reward the seeker.

The precise date of the Afghan conversion to Mahomedanism is unknown, but is said by some to have been as late as the tenth century. The extension of their power, and above all their change of religion drove out from the country of the Soliman range that singular people the Leah Posh Kafirs, to whom I have already alluded.

By some these Kafirs are supposed to be descendants of the Bactrian Greeks. Centuries ago they resisted the hordes of Timar i Lang, and baffled Akbar ; surrounded on all sides by warlike and fanatic enemies of their faith, their own courage and conduct, assisted by the natural fortress which they inhabit, has enabled them to maintain their independence, nay more, exact tribute occasionally from their neighbours.

I should have liked to refer to other matters ; I find, however, that time will not permit of my doing so, more than to point out the following facts, which may be of service to those who desire to inquire further into the history of the Afghans.

The country abounds in honey, and for wine it is notorious through this part of Asia. The Kafirs have a practice which we have been in the habit of attributing to ancient civilisation, of boiling down their wine.

Roads narrow and difficult in the extreme, leading across

frightful chasms, crossed by rope bridges along the edges of tremendous precipices, or through ravines so narrow as to be dark at mid-day. The Kafirs cross by leaping-poles the smaller ravines, and are exceedingly fearless and active.

The country produces wheat, barley, millet, and but a small quantity of rice; deodar and other fir timber, oak, hazel, alder, wild olive, mulberry, walnut, and others; with pears, apples, apricots, plums, peaches, nectarines, figs, quinces, pomegranates, and mulberries.

The rivers of all this region produce gold-dust, and here is to this hour seen practised the mode of obtaining it, which gave origin to the fable of the golden fleece. Skins, with the wool on, being sunk in the beds of the streams, and the wool entangling the particles of gold.

The Kafirs detest fish, though their rivers abound in them.

Their ploughing is rude: a woman often drawing the wooden rake over the land, guiding by a goat's-hair rope, the man following the plough and scattering the seed from a bag about his waist. The corn, when reaped and taken home, is trodden out by oxen.

The Kafirs were supposed formerly to have been divided into eighteen tribes; of these, eight have fallen into Mahomedanism, and are mixed with their other neighbours; ten tribes, who retain their ancient religion and customs, remaining, and forming what is now the Kafir nation.

Those who have thus fallen away are called Nimchas, from a Persian word meaning half or the middle; and a diminutive also expressive of contempt.

When the deputation from the Siah Posh came down in 1839, an Afghan Peon rushed into Edward Conolly's tent, crying, "Here they are; they are all come. Here are all your relations." The Kafirs, too, claimed this relationship, but found themselves coldly received, and went away unconciliated.

Both Wood and Raverty mention that these Kafirs never sit cross-legged like other Orientals, but on stools or something raised from the ground.

Food, unleavened bread, milk curds, butter, honey, herbs, vegetables, and fruit. They sometimes eat beef, but generally flesh of sheep and goats, with game captured in the chase.

Instead of slaughtering cattle, "strange," says Raverty, "and superstitious, the animal is brought out and seized by the head by one man, whilst the other strikes it on the neck with a sword or long knife. If decapitated at one blow, it is considered pure and fit for food; if not, it is given to the Baris, a tribe whom they hold as slaves, considering them in the light of Helots, and who are supposed to be the aborigines of the

country." These latter carry on the mechanical trades of the country. A Kafir considers arms and agriculture alone com-  
porting with his dignity. They have a strange annual feast, of  
from twenty to forty-one days, observed with great solemnity.  
In its concluding ceremonies it closely resembled that festival  
in honour of Venus or Mylitter celebrated by the ancient Baby-  
lonians, against which the Israelites were warned by the Pro-  
phet Jeremiah, a more particular account of which will be found  
in the pages of Rollin, and their marriage ceremonies are pecu-  
liar. Their worship admits of but few forms and ceremonies, the  
principal, consisting in sacrifices of cows and goats to their  
three gods, is conducted by an hereditary priesthood.

They appear to have been spread over the plain country of  
Afghanistan, between the Tulernian range and the Caubul  
river, and to have been driven north by the growth of the  
Afghan nation and by the spread of Islamism, which they re-  
fused to embrace.

The Kafirs have European features, a highly intellectual cast  
of countenance, hair varied from lightest brown to black, eyes  
blue to dark; women uncommonly handsome, go about un-  
veiled. A European penetrating to their country would meet  
with a good reception, could he but once get there. They even  
offer their daughters in marriage to induce a European to stay  
with them; in case of his accepting, he would probably find it  
difficult to get away again.

Hospitable to a fault, they treat their guest more kindly than  
a brother, merry and sociable in disposition, sincere in friend-  
ship as in enmity, faithful to agreement, they hold boasting,  
lying, and duplicity in sovereign contempt.

Fortunate, indeed, will be the man who first has the oppor-  
tunity of exploring these regions.

Capt. Raverty says the safest and best route for a European  
would be the way by Gilgitt to Upper Kashgar or Chital,  
where, if one can get a Kafir to become one's security, one  
might pass from one end of the country to the other, without  
the slightest danger.

In reaching Rajintan from the South, the only danger would  
be that from the Eusufzaie Afghans at Panjkorah, though  
Hazum Khan might be negotiated with *sans doute*.

Wood's Journey to the Oxus; Elphinstone's Caubul; Abbott  
on his Journey to Khiva, taking a route which misses these  
parts of the country; Capt. Raverty's Notes on Kafirstan, are  
works containing reliable information for those who desire to  
become acquainted with the country and people treated of.

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